

# **Montana HiSET Option Program**

## **Guideline Manual**

**2013-2014**

**School Year**

***Guideline 1. Selection procedures should ensure that students who enroll in the Montana HiSET Option Program (1) will not graduate with their class because of credit deficiency, and (2) are otherwise capable of completing graduate requirements.***

- **Age of the student:** Minimum sixteen years of age.
- **When student may enroll:** Must enroll and be accepted before either the start of the first or second semester of school. Enrollment may begin at the start of either the first or second semester of student's senior year or second semester of junior year. Student must complete the program in a time frame that allows them to graduate on time with his or her cohorts.
- **Credit fulfillment:** Montana HiSET Option Program may only fulfill credits prior to enrolling in program, any credits after that cannot be attached to program.
- **Degree of credit deficiency:** The Montana HiSET Option Program can be recommended by school officials only after a review of a student's records show that the student must be at least one year behind his/her ninth grade cohort in academic credits earned, districts can apply for a waiver of this rule for an individual student to the Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist before student is accepted into the program.
- **Evidence of academic ability:** The student must be able to read at a level sufficient to successfully complete HiSET instruction and testing. Sufficient reading ability may be demonstrated by a reading level of 8.0 or higher on the Test of Adult Basic Education or on other standardized tests or by other evidence. The student must have demonstrated sufficient academic ability to successfully complete HiSET instruction and testing in all subjects including writing and mathematics by the time of his/her ninth grade cohort graduates. Academic ability may be demonstrated by passing scores on Official HiSET Practice Tests or by scores on standardized tests that demonstrate the ability to do high school level work.
- **Students identified with disabilities eligible for participation in the program with proper documentation:**
  - A current Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan that indicates participation in the Montana HiSET Option Program is appropriate for the student.
  - IEP or Section 504 documenting any education services and related accommodations necessary for successful completion of the program, must include the testing component and must have a psychological report no older than three years.
- **Procedures for involving teachers, administrators, and counselors in the decision:** The student, his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s), the student's guidance counselor, administrator and at least one teacher (or his/her designees) must participate in the process. A formal meeting will be held before a student is allowed to begin the Montana HiSET Option Program. The meeting will include a discussion of the educational options available to the student; the academic, attendance, and behavioral expectations of the student once in the Montana HiSET Option Program; and the anticipated goal of the program (traditional high school diploma). Educational options should also be discussed if a student completes academic preparation before they take the final HiSET test. The

student, his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s), the student's guidance counselor, school principal (or designee), at least two of the student's teachers, and the school's Montana HiSET Option Program Coordinator must participate in the meeting(s).

- **Procedures for explaining the Montana HiSET Option Program and expectations for student performance to the student and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s):** Participation in the Montana HiSET Option Program must be voluntary. Individual schools will address an orientation process in their application to the state. The student, his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s), the student's guidance counselor, school principal (or designee), at least two of the student's teachers, and the school's Montana HiSET Option Program Coordinator must participate in the meeting(s).
- **Procedures for obtaining written agreement from the student and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to voluntary program participation (include consent form, if available):** A contract outlining the hours of attendance, academic, and behavioral expectation and services to be provided by the district will be signed by the student, his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s), the school principal (or designee), and the school's Montana HiSET Option Coordinator.

***Guideline 2. Counseling is required prior to enrollment and must be available throughout participation in the Montana HiSET Option Program.***

- **Access to certified counselors:** All Montana HiSET Option Program students will continue to have access to their school guidance counselors. Counselors in Montana HiSET Option Program schools will receive training on the Montana HiSET Option Program.
- **Pre-entry counseling:** A formal meeting will be held before a student is allowed to begin the Montana HiSET Option Program. The meeting will include a discussion of the educational options available to the student; the academic, attendance, and behavioral expectations of the student once in the program; and the anticipated goal of the program (traditional high school diploma). Educational options should also be discussed if a student completes academic preparation before they take the final HiSET test. The student, his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s), the student's guidance counselor, school principal (or designee), at least two of the student's teachers, and the school's Montana HiSET Option Program Coordinator must participate in the meeting(s).
- **Follow-up counseling:** Montana HiSET Option Program students will have the same access to postsecondary career pathway counseling. Montana HiSET Option Program students must participate in the Montana Career Information Service (MCIS), or an equivalent process, to develop a career portfolio to ensure college and career readiness.
- **Counseling records:** School records will be maintained for the Montana HiSET Option Program students the same as for other high school students and graduates.



**Guideline 3. *Curricula and instructional content must be at the high school level.***

- **Expectations regarding the range of instruction and alignment with local high school core content and procedures for supporting the districts' efforts:** Montana HiSET Option Program students must participate in an educational program for a minimum of 20 hours each week, or if greater, the minimum hours allowed by state regulations to maintain full-time school attendance. The Montana HiSET Option Program students must participate in the Montana HiSET Option Program with the curriculum directed toward areas related to the Montana HiSET Tests for at least a minimum of 15 hours each week. Should a student's school district feel that a student needs more time working on the curriculum provided to him/her, then a change in hours may be made as long as the program coordinator, school principal, and student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are notified prior to changing the student's hours. Additional classroom credit courses and experiential learning should be made available to Montana HiSET Option Program students if the school and student are to meet the full-time attendance policies of the local school district.
- **Expectations pertaining to the range of types of instructional materials and procedures for supporting the districts' efforts:** Curricula and instructional content for Montana HiSET Option Program must be at least at the secondary school level according to the Montana Office of Public Instruction's policies and procedures. Instructional methods and materials in the Montana HiSET Option Program classes should emphasize the development of improved skills and understanding in reading, math, writing, social studies, and science related to the requirements for language arts, social studies, science and math. It will be important for participants to develop test taking skills, but most of their time in the Montana HiSET Option Program should be spent on activities that develop higher order thinking skills that can be applied at home, work, and in postsecondary education as well as on the Montana HiSET Tests.
- **Expectations pertaining to the integration of workforce development instruction and procedures for supporting the districts' efforts:** A student must be enrolled in the Montana HiSET Option Program for 15 hours a week of educational services. Instruction must be devoted to math, science, social studies, and language arts. Montana HiSET Option Program students must participate in the Montana Career Information Service (MCIS), or an equivalent process, to develop a career portfolio to ensure college and career readiness.

***Guideline 4. To ensure effective instructional delivery, sufficient instructional resources and qualified staff must be allocated to the Montana HiSET Option Program.***

- **Instructor qualifications:** Montana HiSET Option Program instructors must be certified teachers by the state of Montana, unless approved by Montana Office of Public Instruction (Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist).
- **Expectations pertaining to instructional delivery strategies (e.g., individual direct instruction, group instruction, and use of computer assisted instruction):** The Montana HiSET Option Program will encourage best practices and student-centered instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Instructional support will be provided by the Montana Office of Public Instruction.  
If the school district decides to subcontract with an Adult Basic & Literacy Education Program to offer the 15 hours of curriculum needed, said hours must still fall in the allotted school day offered to other students not in the program. If the school district subcontracts with an Adult Basic & Literacy Education Program for HiSET instruction, the district is still responsible for monitoring student attendance and progress and for providing counseling and support services and for making additional district instruction such as career technical education and elective courses available to the student.
- **Expectations pertaining to the student/teacher ratio. (Please provide justification if the expected ratio exceeds 15/1):** This is strongly recommended, if a class exceeds the 15/1 ratio whether that class is on the school campus or through an Adult Basic & Literacy Education Program that has been subcontracted by the school district, a waiver must be submitted to the Montana Office of Public Instruction for the Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist.
- **Expectations pertaining to instructional materials (e.g., print materials; electronic materials):** School District's Montana HiSET Option Program must provide an adequate supply of textbooks, practice materials, technology (i.e.; I-Pads, Smart Phones, etc.) and educational software to support students in preparing to successfully pass the Montana HiSET Tests and employment needs.
- **Stipulations related to professional staff development:** Montana HiSET Option Program instructors must take part in sufficient professional development to maintain certification. In addition, it is recommended that all staff members involved with the Montana HiSET Option Program in said school district participate in Montana HiSET Option Program staff development provided by the Montana Office of Public Instruction and also any provided by that school district.
- **Montana HiSET Option Program instruction taking place off campus:** The attendance of the Montana HiSET Option Program students must be monitored by the school district and transportation and organizational arrangements must be made to make it possible for Montana HiSET Option Program students to participate in school-based opportunities on school grounds.

***Guideline 5. Successful students who complete the Montana HiSET Option Program must be awarded a credential by the school district that includes the term “diploma.”***

- The student is enrolled in an alternate education program; and the school board determines that the pupil has demonstrated a level of proficiency in the subjects for which credit is required equivalent to that which he/she would have attained if he/she had satisfied the credit requirements.
- The HiSET tests are a nationally normed, standards-based means of measuring high school competency. Educational Testing Service (ETS) has granted Montana permission to use the HiSET test battery as a means to demonstrate proficiency provided that the program leads to a high school diploma.
- Students who satisfy all Montana HiSET Option Program requirements will be given official school recognition of their achievement. Their successful attainment will be celebrated by participating in the high school graduation ceremony.
- If student fails to pass the HiSET after three opportunities in that school semester of enrollment then they do not meet requirements of Montana HiSET Option Program and are not given the credit waiver for meeting the requirements of the contract signed by the student and the school district.

***Guideline 6. Planning and oversight of the implementation of the Montana HiSET Option Program will be the responsibility of the Montana Office of Public Instruction.***

- **The organizational unit and person primarily responsible for HiSET:**
  - Margaret Bowles – Montana HiSET Administrator
  - John Peterson – Montana HiSET Test/Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist

***Guideline 7. The state agency (ies) will annually collect data and information about the Montana HiSET Option Program from local school systems and will submit the data to ETS or other agencies if needed.***

■ **Procedures for distributing the standardized data form to participating districts:**

The Montana Office of Public Instruction HiSET Administrator will obtain any required standardized data form from ETS. The Montana Office of Public Instruction Montana HiSet Option Program Specialist will coordinate with each Montana HiSET Option Program school to ensure they understand the data requirements and receive the HiSET testing data for each student in that districts Montana HiSET Option Program.

■ **Procedures for collecting completed forms:** Local applicants will be required to collect all demographic and relevant academic data. The Montana Office of Public Instruction Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist and the Montana Office of Public Instruction HiSET Administrator will review data collections to compile program reports and inform future professional development and technical assistance. Data collection and reports will be submitted to ETS Testing as required.

■ **Procedures for submitting completed form to ETS:** The local Montana HiSET Option Program lead staff will be responsible for their program data collection. The Montana Office of Public Instruction HiSET Administrator and Montana Office of Public Instruction Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist will be responsible for aggregating data at the state level for submission to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and ETS.

■ **Responsible parties and the responsibilities assumed by each person:**

- Local Program Staff: student level data collection.
- Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist: manage and monitor local and aggregate data.
- Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist and HiSET Administrator: review data for submission for ETS and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.



**Guideline 8.** *HiSET test administration for the Montana HiSET Option Program must conform to all regulations protecting the integrity of the tests.*

- **Test administration:** All tests will be administered in an official HiSET testing center under the direction of a Chief Examiner, or examiner, skilled in the administration of the HiSET Test. Montana Office of Public Instruction Montana HiSET Option Program will be prepared for HiSET in 2014.
- **Procedures for ensuring that Official HiSET Testing Centers are sufficiently large and are adequately staffed to absorb the additional number of test takers resulting from the Montana HiSET Option Program:** The Montana Office of Public Instruction HiSET Administrator will work with each testing center and Montana HiSET Option Program to develop a testing schedule that will meet the needs of students and the testing center's capacity to serve. The Montana Office of Public Instruction does not anticipate that the Montana HiSET Option Program will have such a large number of students that this will be a problem. If the program grows beyond capacity to serve the students, the HiSET Administrator will work with local centers to address an increased number of test takers.
- **Procedures for identifying test takers who are Montana HiSET Option Program students:** The Office of Public Instruction HiSET Administrator and the Office of Public Instruction Montana HiSET Option Program Specialist will develop a protocol for the identification of a HiSET Option Program test taker and the reporting of test scores to the local program lead teacher.

**Guideline 9.** *General Implementation Plan and Procedures.*

- **Criteria for closing a Montana HiSET Option Program school:** It will be required of each district Montana HiSET Option Program to meet or exceed state of Montana HiSET Option Program passing rate. If said school does not meet the state of Montana passage rate for that school year they will be granted one year probation. If they do not meet state of Montana passage rate required at end of the probationary year, the program will be closed and the school will have to reapply to become a Montana HiSET Option Program school after a one year hiatus.

**Guideline 10.** *Financial support*

- To ensure effective instructional delivery, sufficient instructional resources and qualified staff financial support must be allocated to the Montana HiSET Option Program in the school district.





**Guideline 11.** *Testing accommodations for participants in the Montana HiSET Option Program:*

- All Montana HiSET testing for Montana HiSET Option Program participants will take place in an official Montana HiSET Testing Center under the direction of a Montana HiSET Chief Examiner who will follow all guidelines in the Montana HiSET Options Program Guidelines Manual.
- The Montana HiSET Administrator, in collaboration with the Montana HiSET Option Program Director, will develop a release form that each Montana HiSET Option Program student will present to the Montana HiSET Examiner to allow test results to be reported to the local Montana HiSET Option Program staff and will also develop protocol for identifying Montana HiSET Option Program participants who are taking the test at that testing center. The Montana HiSET Administrator will work with each testing center and each Montana HiSET Option Program to develop a testing schedule that will meet the needs of students and the testing center's capacity to serve. The Montana Office of Public Instruction does not anticipate that the Montana HiSET Option Program will have such a large number of students that this will be a problem; if the program grows beyond the capacity to serve, the Montana HiSET Administrator will work with local centers to address an increased number of test takers.

**Guideline 12.** *Data collection procedures*

- School district applicants for Montana HiSET Option Program will be required to demonstrate their plan for collecting required data including the age, gender, ethnicity, and IDEA status of Montana HiSET Option Program participants and the number of participants who complete Montana HiSET tests. They must also agree to report the gender and ethnicity of all students in their high school.
- The Montana HiSET Option Program data collection year is July 1 through June 30. School districts will be required to submit data for the year to the Montana HiSET Option Program Director by July 31. The District Superintendent of Schools for the sponsoring School Administrative Unit must sign the Montana HiSET Option Program report.



**Guideline 13. School District application procedure**

Step 1. Review all district requirement's found in both the Montana HiSET Option Program guideline manual and in the Montana HiSET Option Program school district application.

Step 2. Make sure that all aspects of districts program are in place.

Step 3. Complete Montana HiSET Option Program School District Application and return to Office of Public Instruction for HiSET Program Specialist's approval.

Step 4. Understand that on-site monitoring will occur during the academic year or as requested by your school.